



## **Florida House of Representatives**

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## **HOUSE VOTES UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE LEGISLATION CRACKING DOWN ON “PILL MILLS”**

**TALLAHASSEE** – Today, the House of Representatives passed Senate Bill 2272 known as the “Pill Mill Bill” sponsored by Representative John Legg (R-Port Richey) and Representative Joe Abruzzo (D-Wellington). The legislation passed the House unanimously. SB 2272 will crack down on the corrupt pain clinics operating around the state that have become a national problem. The legislation increases regulation for pain clinics and for physicians that own or work in a pain clinic and provides criminal and financial penalties for violations of the new law.

Physicians wishing to practice in a pain clinic will be required, effective July 1, 2010, to have completed a pain medicine fellowship or residency, or be recognized as a specialist in pain by the appropriate licensing board. Additionally, the physicians will not be able to dispense more than a 72-hour supply of controlled substances to a patient without a prescription. Violators of the dispensing limit will face a 3<sup>rd</sup> degree felony charge with up to 5 years in prison, or up to a \$5,000 fine. The bill also prohibits physicians from advertising or promoting the use, sale or dispensing of a controlled substance.

Pain clinics will be required to register with the Department of Health (DOH) and will be annually inspected by the Department to ensure compliance with the new law. DOH is prohibited from issuing a license to a pain clinic unless it is owned by a physician or is licensed as a “health care clinic.” Additionally, a physician who has had disciplinary action taken against him or her for improper behavior involving controlled substances will not be permitted to own or be employed by a pain clinic. Violations of these provisions could result in fines imposed by the Department of up to \$5,000 per day.

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Pain clinics in South Florida attract patients from all over the country. More oxycodone is distributed in Florida than in any other state. The top 25 pain management clinics for dispensing prescription pain relievers are in Florida and the 50 doctors who dispense the most oxycodone in the entire country are in Florida, 33 in Broward County. A major factor contributing to these alarming statistics are Florida's "dispensing practitioners" who have special approval to dispense drugs directly from their offices. In 2006, they handed out 85 percent of all oxycodone distributed by doctors nationally.

"By limiting physician dispensing and advertising of these dangerous and addictive drugs as well as increased penalties for such violations, we provide law enforcement with the tools they need to combat this deadly epidemic. This legislation will pull the plug on a cottage industry of illegitimate pill mills and pain clinics that are tearing apart the lives and families of so many Floridians. I want to commend Rep. Abruzzo for all of his hard work and dedication in the crafting of this legislation that will ensure that Florida will no longer be labeled as the pill mill capital of the U.S.," said Representative John Legg.

"Narcotics should be available for medical purposes and unavailable for recreational abuse. Our good bill addresses both of these issues," said Representative Joseph Abruzzo.

Senate Bill 2272 now goes back to the Senate for final approval.

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